CHAPTER 25:
LITTLE HOLMES AND THE PORTRAIT OF THE RAVEN-HAIRED WOMAN

ART BY ICHIHA AKIZUKI
WRITTEN BY MAI MOCHIZUKI
CHARACTER DESIGNS BY
SHIZU YAMAUCHI

KURA

THANKS FOR HELPIN' OUT OVER CHRISTMAS!

THE CAFÉ'S DOIN' GREAT NOW!

DIDJA SEE, AOI-CHAN?

This is Ueda-san.

He's an entrepre-neur who's started a variety of businesses.

He's also a regular at Kura and an old college pal of the manager's.

EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY FOR A WEEK, I'M SURE GLAD I ASKED HOLMES FOR HELP.

PEOPLE ARE RAVING ABOUT IT ON SOCIAL MEDIA, TOO!

Panda to draw in customers

Recently, because Holmes is so handsome and charming,

Ueda-san asked him to help work the grand opening of his new café.

I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT'S ALL WORKING OUT,

BUT PLEASE DON'T ASK ME TO DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN.

I DISLIKE BEING THE CENTER OF ATTENTION DOING THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I'M AFRAID I WAS PURELY FOCUSED ON BUSINESS.

C'MON! I BET YOU LOVED WATCHING THOSE GIRLS GO NUTS OVER YOU.

AW, FOR REAL?

YES, FOR REAL.

THEY'RE SO CLOSE...

WE SURE HAVE.

UM, HAVE YOU TWO KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME?

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I'M A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

OH, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

KIYOTAKA'S MOM, KIYOMI, WENT TO SCHOOL WITH US TOO.

Y'KNOW ME AND TAKESHI WERE CLASSMATES IN COLLEGE, RIGHT?

LIKE-WISE.

I HAVE MORE MEMORIES OF YOU THAN OF MY OWN MOTHER.

AND LITTLE HOLMES HERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN LIKE KIN TO ME...

WHAT ?!

I EVEN GAVE HIM THE NICKNAME "HOLMES"!

...DIED WHEN HE WAS LITTLE.

HOLMES-SAN'S MOTHER...

THAT'S RIGHT...

I HAD NO IDEA...

But it's annoying, so I wish he hadn't.

IT'S TRUE THAT UEDA-SAN WAS THE FIRST ONE TO CALL ME THAT.

I want to hear it!

IT'S NOT MUCH OF A STORY, REALLY.

AND IT WOULD BE AWKWARD TO TELL IT MYSELF...

WHAT, I NEVER TOLD YOU THAT STORY?

Sit down and we'll fill you in.

WATSON HAS WALKED THEM MANY A TIME, YET DOESN'T KNOW THE ANSWER.

IN THE HOLMES SHORT STORY *A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA*, THERE'S A SCENE WHERE HOLMES ASKS WATSON HOW MANY STAIRS THERE ARE UP TO HIS OFFICE.

IT'S AN ICONIC SCENE THAT EXEMPLIFIES HOLMES'S POWERS OF OBSERVATION.

"YOU SEE, BUT YOU DO NOT OBSERVE."

BUT HOLMES IS DIFFERENT!

HE KNOWS, AND HE TELLS WATSON:

AND HE SAID...

I ASKED HIM THAT SAME QUESTION FROM THE STORY.

NOW THEN, ONE DAY WHEN KIYOTAKA WAS A KID, WE WERE QUIZZING EACH OTHER FOR FUN.

FIFTEEN STEPS!

HE JUST SAID, "I'VE SEEN THEM, SO I KNOW."

HE DIDN'T COUNT 'EM OR NOTHING.

!

JUST LIKE THAT.

STILL, I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D CALL ME THAT FOREVER AFTER.

JUST LIKE HOLMES, RIGHT?

"I'VE SEEN THEM, SO I KNOW..."

SECOND TIME!

I WANT TO HEAR IT!

NO, UEDA-SAN—

I BET YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT HOLMES'S FIRST DETECTIVE ADVENTURE EITHER.

NOW, AOI-CHAN,

AOI-CHAN ASKED, SO WE'VE GOTTA TELL HER, HOLMES.

IF YOU INSIST.

THE HOLMES OF THE TERAMACHI SANJO'S FIRST CASE...

It happened around this time, fifteen years ago.

My wife and I were getting divorced, and we had to sell our house.

So I got my friends together for one last "scold and comfort the poor sap" party.

TAKESHI, KIYOTAKA...

THANKS FOR COMIN'.

THE FOLKS HERE MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST COMPANY FOR KIYOTAKA, BUT...

HEDA-SAN! HERE!

AND MY COLLECTION'S ON DISPLAY, SO FEEL FREE TO HAVE A LOOK.

WE'VE GOT LOTS OF TASTY STUFF TO EAT, SO HELP YOURSELVES.

CHAM-PAGNE, EH?

THANKS FOR BRINGING SOMETHING CONSU-MABLE.

OKAY!

Your collection?!

DASH

ARE YOU OKAY?

YEAH.

ACTUALLY, I'M KINDA... RELIEVED.

FOR NOW, LET'S EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY!

GRAB

ガ!!

ANYTHING ELSE VANISHED YET?

STILL PLENTY OF BOOZE LEFT...

COME TO THINK OF IT, WHERE'D HOLMES GO?

THERE YOU ARE.

AH, THAT ONE.

...

UEDA-SAN, THIS PICTURE...

HEY, THIS SURE TAKES ME BACK.

YOU STILL HAVE THAT THING, EH?

YES, FOR 5,000 YEN.

OKU-MURA.

NISHI.

YOU SAID BEFORE THAT YOU BOUGHT IT ON THE CHEAP AT SOME ANTIQUE SHOP, RIGHT?

I tried to buy it once myself.

I'M PRETTY SURE...

...HE'S NOT LOOKING TO SELL IT.

I'LL PAY YOU 10,000 FOR IT RIGHT NOW.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A PIECE TO PUT IN MY FRONT HALL.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.

OH, REALLY?

BUT IT'S JUST AN ANONYMOUS PAINTING, ISN'T IT?

I HAVE PLENTY OF PIECES TO TICKLE YOUR FANCY...

WANT TO BUY SOME NEW ART TO COMMEMO-RATE YOUR NEW LIFE?

C'MON. LET'S GET DRINKING.

THAT'S ENOUGH.

EVEN SO...

I DON'T REALLY WANT TO SELL IT.

ALWAYS LOOKING TO MAKE A SALE, HUH, NISHI?

HOW SHAME-LESS...

Maybe it's time to wind things down.

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E-EMER-GENCY!

UEDA-SAN!

NISHI-SAN!

THE PAINTING IS GONE!

HOW COULD THEY HAVE?

THE ONLY WAY TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE IS THROUGH THIS LIVING ROOM.

BUT WE DIDN'T SEE ANYONE WALK OUT WITH A PAINTING.

Someone would've noticed..

I GUESS... SOMEONE DIDN'T JUST BREAK IN AND STEAL IT, RIGHT?

D-DOES THAT MEAN SOMEONE TOOK IT?

IF WE SEARCH EVERYONE'S BAGS...

THAT MEANS IT MUST STILL BE IN THE HOUSE SOME-WHERE!

IT'S NOT LIKE THEY COULD'VE GONE OUT THE WINDOW, EITHER. IT'S ON THE SECOND FLOOR.

NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.

...

IT WAS JUST A CHEAP PICTURE...

HOLMES ?!

IT WOULD BE EASY TO GET IT OUT OF THE HOUSE.

PLEASE STOP CALLING ME THAT.

SCOWL

I KNEW IT!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, KID?

HUH?

THE CULPRIT PROBABLY GOT THE PAINTING OUT OF THE HOUSE...

...BY USING A LINE TO DROP IT.

THERE ARE TRACES OF A ROPE SCRAPING HERE.

BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ALREADY CAME AND GOT IT...

HEDA-SAN, HAVE ANY OF YOUR ART-LOVING FRIENDS EVER SEEN THIS PICTURE?

YOU MEAN...

THE THEFT WAS PREMEDI-TATED?

OKUMURA HERE IS AN ART LECTURER.

NISHI'S AN ART DEALER.

WELL...

UM, LET ME SEE...

I DON'T USUALLY HAVE THAT PIECE ON DISPLAY.

TAKEDA AND OJIMA ARE UKIYO-E ENTHUSIASTS... BUT THAT'S ABOUT IT.

YOU'VE GOT... WHAT?

I'VE GOT IT.

THE CULPRIT IS NISHI-SAN.

...HUH?

AS WE ESTABLISHED, THE CRIME WAS PRE-MEDITATED.

WAIT A MINUTE!

WHY WOULD I DO THIS?

THEY NEEDED SOMEONE TO CATCH THE PAINTING AND ABSCOND WITH IT.

THEY COULD HAVE DONE IT ALONE, BUT THE RISK WAS TOO HIGH.

MOREOVER, WHILE WE WERE ALL LOOKING FOR THE PAINTING AND THE CULPRIT,

NOBODY ACTUALLY LEFT THE HOUSE.

THE CULPRIT NEEDED TO HAVE A ROPE,

AS WELL AS AN ACCOMPLICE.

WHAT?

NO...

JUST BY WATCHING...

JUST BY OBSERVING, HE KNEW WHAT EVERYONE HERE WAS DOING.

NATURALLY, ONLY SOMEONE WHO ALREADY KNEW ABOUT THE PAINTING...

...COULD HAVE MADE SUCH PREPA-RATIONS.

THAT MEANS IT COULD BE OKUMURA, TOO!

HEY!

AND THE PAINTING IS OUTSIDE OF TAKEDA-SAN AND OJIMA-SAN'S INTERESTS.

WHEN HE FIRST SAW THE PAINTING,

OKUMURA OFFERED TO BUY IT FOR 10,000 YEN.

?

IF HE'D BEEN PLANNING TO STEAL IT LATER,

HE WOULDN'T HAVE OFFERED TO PAY MONEY FOR IT, WOULD HE?

WAIT A MINUTE.

THE PAINTING ISN'T EVEN WORTH THAT MUCH.

WHY WOULD I GO THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE TO STEAL IT?

THERE'S NO MOTIVE.

YOU'RE AN ART DEALER.

THAT'S EXACTLY HOW I KNOW YOU'RE THE CULPRIT.

SO YOU KNOW THE PAINTING'S REAL WORTH, DON'T YOU?

THAT PIECE IS A GENUINE LÉONARD FOUJITA,

ALSO KNOWN AS FUJITA TSUGU-HARU.

IT'S REAL WORTH?

WAIT, FUJITA TSUGU-HARU...

FUJITA TSUGUHARU WAS A JAPANESE ARTIST KNOWN FOR HIS "MILK WHITE SKIN."

HE GAINED RENOWN AS A PAINTER IN PARIS BEFORE RETURNING TO JAPAN,

BUT ULTIMATELY WENT BACK TO PARIS AND GAINED FRENCH CITIZENSHIP.

HE WORKED IN A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS...

FROM OIL TO WATERCOLOR, FROM BLOCK PRINTS TO ILLUSTRATIONS.

IT'S A REAL FUJITA?

BUT I BELIEVE THOSE BEAUTIFUL LINES ARE CLEARLY HIS WORK.

IF THAT'S REAL, THEN IT'D BE WORTH MILLIONS...

W-WAIT A MINUTE!

YOU CAN'T TAKE SOME KID AT HIS WORD!

DON'T TELL ME...

NISHI.

YOU SAID THE GALLERY ISN'T IN THE RED ANYMORE.

THIS IS YAGASHIRA KIYOTAKA.

HE'S NOT JUST "SOME KID."

YAGASHIRA SEIJI'S GRANDSON ...?

HE'S THE GRANDSON OF THE NATIONALLY ACCREDITED APPRAISER YAGASHIRA SEIJI, AND HE'S TRAINING TO BECOME AN APPRAISER HIMSELF.

HE MAY BE A CHILD, BUT HE'S GOT AN EYE FOR THIS STUFF.

THOUGH YOU CAN CONTINUE TO PROTEST YOUR INNOCENCE, IF YOU'D LIKE.

OTHERWISE, I'LL HAVE TO TURN YOU IN.

NISHI.

IF YOU RETURN THE PAINTING NOW, I WON'T CALL THE POLICE.

I'M SORRY...

I GOTTA LEARN TO CHOOSE BETTER FRIENDS.

YEP.

SO HE REALLY WAS THE THIEF?!

BUT THANKS TO OUR LITTLE DETECTIVE HERE, I GOT TO KEEP THAT PRECIOUS PAINTING.

I'M AWFUL GRATEFUL, HOLMES.

MY GRAND-FATHER WAS A STRICT AND OVERP-ROTECTIVE TEACHER.

MY FATHER MEANT WELL, BUT DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER.

YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON WHO REALLY TREATED ME LIKE A CHILD.

I'M THE ONE WHO'S GRATEFUL.

AFTER MY MOTHER DIED...

AW, SHUCKS ...

SAYIN' SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT OUTTA NOWHERE ...

I CAME TO THINK OF YOU AS A SECOND FATHER, UEDA-SAN.

AND SO...

KNOCK IT OFF!

I'M GRATEFUL FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

I MEAN THAT.

I'M THE MAN I AM TODAY BECAUSE OF YOU, UEDA-SAN.

IT REALLY WAS SPECIAL TO YOU, WASN'T IT?

BUT THAT PAINTING...

AFTER ALL, IT'S RARE FOR YOU TO BUY A PAINTING...

...BY AN ANONYMOUS ARTIST.

SO YOU MUST HAVE REALLY LIKED IT, HUH?

THAT'S RIGHT.

...REMINDED ME OF SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO ME.

UEDA-KUN!

THAT PICTURE ...

WHAT, PRAY TELL, DID MY GRANDFATHER ASK YOU TO DO?

And why did he ask you?

Wait a minute.

I'VE GOT AN ERRAND TO RUN FOR SEIJI-SAN.

WELL, I'D BETTER GET GOIN'.

SEE YOU!

SEE YOU, HOLMES! AOI-CHAN!

YOU KNOW. FOR NEW YEAR'S...

NEW YEAR'S? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

Welp! I'M SEIJI-SAN WILL FILL YOU IN!

Has a bad feeling about this

AOI-CHAN SURE IS SHARP.

"THAT PAIN-TING... IT REALLY WAS SPECIAL TO YOU, WASN'T IT?"

HEDA-SAN.

WHAT IS IT, KIYOTAKA?

THIS PAIN-TING...

IT REMINDS ME A LITTLE OF MY MOM.

ME TOO.

SAY, HOLMES ...

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER?

HER WARM HANDS, THE GENTLE WAY SHE TALKED TO ME...

AND...

ONLY A LITTLE BIT.

SQUEEZE

HER LYING IN THE COFFIN.

I POUNDED ON THE DOOR, BUT THEY SAID I HAD TO STAY AWAY OR ELSE I MIGHT CATCH IT TOO.

AND WHEN THEY FOUND OUT IT WAS INFLUENZA, SHE STAYED SHUT UP IN HER ROOM.

SHE FELL ILL BEFORE SHE DIED...

...UNTIL THE DAY MY MOTHER PASSED AWAY.

THE DOOR DIDN'T OPEN AGAIN...

BUT...

THAT'S WHY...

...ALL I REMEMBER IS...

KIYOTAKA.

GRANDPA SAYS...

...THAT MEN SHOULDN'T CRY.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HOLD IT IN.

I'M THE ONLY ONE HERE.

I WON'T TELL ANYBODY.

SO, KIYO-TAKA...

HE JUST MEANS...

...THAT WE SHOULDN'T REVEAL OUR WEAKNES-SES.

THAT'S NOT THE SAME AS HOLDING IN YOUR SADNESS.

I WANTED TO SEE MY MOM!

I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT GETTING SICK!

I JUST WANTED THEM TO OPEN THE DOOR!

I...

I MISS YOU...

I MISS YOU SO MUCH...

MOMMY!

I WANTED TO HUG HER...

JUST ONE MORE TIME!

CHAPTER 25
END